



EMERGENCY NEWS FROM THE STATE OF WASHINGTON

State Emergency Operations Center
Camp Murray, Washington

For immediate release

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Wildfire conditions worsen; Fire prevention steps urged for homeowners

CAMP MURRAY – Yesterday’s loss of seven homes in Okanogan should be an alert for homeowners to take steps now to protect their residences from wildfire, state fire officials say.

“With the 2003 wild land fire season well on its way in Washington State, maintaining a defensible space around your home should be a priority for every homeowner who resides in a location where there is a high potential for a wild land fire,” said State Fire Marshal Mary Corso, “The following are some tips for homeowners to enhance fire safety.”

- Establish a well-irrigated area that encircles the structure for at least 30 feet on all sides.
- Keep trees and shrubs properly pruned. Prune all trees so the lowest limbs are 6 to 10 feet from the ground.
- Remove leaf clutter and dead and overhanging branches.
- Mow the lawn regularly.
- Dispose of cuttings and debris promptly, according to local regulations.
- Store firewood away from the house.
- Be sure the irrigation system is well maintained.
- Use care when refueling garden equipment and maintain it regularly.
- Store and use flammable liquids properly.
- Dispose of smoking materials carefully.
- Become familiar with local regulations regarding vegetation clearances, disposal of debris, and fire safety requirements for equipment.
- Give yourself added protection with “fuel breaks” like driveways, gravel walkways, and lawns.

Additional information is available on the Firewise homepage at www.firewise.org.

DNR Fire Weather Meteorologist Greg Sinnett also cautioned that Washington’s forest fuel moisture levels are reaching record lows. “Except for the immediate coast, Washington’s forest fuels are continuing to cure out. The eastside is heading for record low fuels moisture values as western Washington approaches 1994 records. No significant precipitation is forecast for at least the next 10 days, even as we head into the lightning season,” Sinnett explained.

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Meanwhile, the State Fire Services Mobilization Plan support for Okanogan's Crestview Fire and the state's Emergency Operations Center activation officially ended earlier this morning. Under the plan, firefighters from Douglas and Chelan counties assisted Okanogan city and county fire services.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Wednesday also approved assistance for the cost of fighting the Crestview fire under its Fire Management Assistance Grant Program.

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